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VIII. — *Scaenica*

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I. Arg. Aesch. *Agamemnon*: *ιδίως δὲ Αἰσχύλος τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ἀναιρεῖσθαι ποιεῖ, τὸν δὲ Κασάνδρας σιωπήσας θάνατον νεκρὰν αὐτὴν ὑπέδειξε, πεποιθήκε τε Αἰγισθον καὶ Κλυταιμῆστραν ἐκάτερον δυσχυριζόμενον περὶ τῆς ἀναιρέσεως ἐνὶ κεφαλαίῳ, τὴν μὲν τῇ ἀναιρέσει Ἰφιγενείας, τὸν δὲ ταῖς τοῦ πατρὸς Θυέστου ἐξ Ἀτρέως συμφοραῖς.*

Before the promulgation of the Dörpfeld theory ἐπὶ (τῆς) σκηνῆς was as a matter of course taken as meaning "on the stage,"¹ and not a few scholars who reject this theory are still content with that translation. In the present instance, however, this rendering does not provide the sense required, since as a matter of fact Agamemnon is not slain within the spectators' view. Accordingly, several writers² accept the conjectural substitution of ὑπό for ἐπὶ (proposed by Stanley, 1863) and then interpret the phrase as meaning "behind the scenes," and there is the more apparent excuse for this procedure since Philostratus informs us that Aeschylus invented the technical device of having a death occur behind the scenes; cf. *Vit. Apollon.* VI, II, p. 113 K: τὸ ὑπὸ σκηνῆς ἀποθνήσκειν ἐπενόησεν (Αἰσχύλος), ὥς μὴ ἐν φανερῷ σφάττοι. But notwithstanding the general resemblance between the passages we must remember that Philostratus and the author of the hypothesis had quite different objects in making these statements. Philostratus had no definite myth in mind and pointed out the difference between Aeschylus and his *prede-*

¹ Cf. Klausen's edition (1833), p. 4, note ad loc. "non satis accurate dictum, sed non false, etc."; Wecklein's *Orestie* (Leipzig, 1888), 29, n. 2: "Diese Angabe ist nicht ganz richtig. Nur den Weheruf des von tödlichem Schlage getroffenen Agamemnon hört man V. 1342 aus dem Innern des Hauses"; Karsten (1855), p. 2, n. 1; Kennedy (1878), p. 1, n.; etc.

² Cf. Albert Müller, "Untersuchungen zu den Bühnenalterthümern," *Philologus*, Supplbd. VII (1899), 20; Otto Scherling, *De vocis σκηνή quantum ad theatrum Graecum pertinet significatione et usu* (Marburg dissert., 1906), 31.

cessors (see context) in an important detail of dramatic technique, while the writer of the argument wrote of a single story and how Aeschylus differed from the other members of the great tragic triad in his treatment thereof. Of course, Philostratus did not know that this technical innovation was utterly impossible during the time of Aeschylus' predecessors for the reason that a suitable scenic background was not introduced until after the appearance of Sophocles.¹ In the earlier period deaths must either have been boldly enacted before the spectators' eyes or reported by a messenger. It is, therefore, conceivable, though by no means capable of proof, that the new device was employed for the first time in the *Agamemnon*. But in any case the purpose of the statement in the hypothesis is entirely different. It was the regular practice of Aristophanes in his arguments to contrast the treatment of the mythological material by each of the three great tragic playwrights, and *ιδίως* is here used to introduce that topic. To consider the matters in reverse order, in the *Agamemnon* Clytemnestra seeks to justify herself for her conduct by referring to the sacrifice of Iphigenia (1521 ff.) and Aegisthus similarly by reason of the deceit practiced by Atreus upon Thyestes (1580 ff.). In Sophocles' *Electra*, on the contrary, though Clytemnestra pleads this excuse (530 ff.), Aegisthus is refused a chance to defend himself (1482 ff.), while in the *Electra* of Euripides Clytemnestra again urges this defense (1020 ff.), but Aegisthus is attacked unexpectedly and given no opportunity for a justification (839 ff.). As to the second point of difference, Sophocles seems not to have introduced Cassandra into his plays at all; and though Euripides in the *Troades* (357 ff.) represents her prophetically raving over the fate shortly to befall her, he did not choose her death itself for dramatic treatment. The participial clause (*σιωπήσας*

¹ Cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1449 a, 18; Vitruv. vii, praef. 11; and Wilamowitz, *Hermes*, xxi (1886), 597 ff. Of course, such scenic accessories as were used in earlier plays (an altar in the *Suppliants* and *Septem*; a tomb in the *Persians*) could not be so employed. The transition from such structures to a building serving as a dressing room for actors and representing the abode or temporary place of sojourn of the *dramatis personae* occurred about 465 B.C.; cf. Dignan, *The Idle Actor in Aeschylus*, 13, n. 14.

κτλ.) is parenthetical and scarcely correct, since the audience is amply prepared for Cassandra's murder and Clytemnestra afterwards refers to it (1440 ff.). Doubtless all that is meant is that no sound is heard at the fatal moment, whereas Agamemnon's death cry is heard (at 1343) from within the scene building (hence Bothe's needless alteration to ἀπὸ σκηνῆς). Finally, with reference to the first point, no extant play or fragment, no scholium or hypothesis, no title of a lost play gives us the slightest reason to suppose that Sophocles or Euripides ever represented Agamemnon's death either before or behind the scenes. Consequently, this conjectural reading is quite as bad as the disease it seeks to remedy.

In my opinion, however, a broader study of the phrase will suggest a satisfactory interpretation without the necessity of altering the text. So long as ἐπὶ (τῆς) σκηνῆς was thought invariably to mean "on the stage," every passage was forced to fit that Procrustean rendering; but it must now be recognized that, particularly in the later literature, the phrase has a shifting application. The usage in the fourth century was first cited as having a bearing upon scenic antiquities by Herbert Richards, whom the fire of adverse criticism forced to admit that he had advanced unwarranted claims as regards the value of the expression to defenders of the traditional view.¹ And it is now generally recognized that the phrase

¹ Cf. *Class. Rev.* XVIII (1904), 179: "I should like to say that I am less confident now as to its meaning literally *on the stage*." In the same place he accuses me of resting 'under a misapprehension as to what my evidence can prove.' He proceeds: "Let us assume that in the four *Poetics* passages ἐ. τ. σ. may be roughly translated 'at scenic contests,' 'at the performance,' or even that (as he says) σ. actually means 'performance.' This proves nothing at all as to the original sense of the expression, which may have been just the same as our 'on the stage' and have been subsequently by usage weakened into indistinctness. Hence the whole argument of this paper falls to the ground." I must protest against the unfairness of this procedure, since my argument was directed against Mr. Richards's view as at first announced, but he has now shifted his position. In his original publication (*Class. Rev.* v (1891), 97, he made no mention of "the original sense of the expression," but grounded his whole case upon fourth-century usage. He advanced the following theses:

(1) ἐπὶ necessarily involves elevation ("does not the word ἐπὶ imply something raised above the level?"). This claim was quickly demolished by the collections of Reisch (*Das griech. Theater*, 285 f.; since augmented by other scholars),

can no longer be cited with confidence as fatal to the Dörpfeld theory.¹

I have myself discussed the use of the phrase at its first (extant) appearance,² and now desire, without reopening the

as Mr. Richards now acknowledges : "Certainly there are uses of *ἐπὶ* with the genitive, which go to show that it may mean *at* or *near* the σ., i.e. the background, as Dr. Dörpfeld contends. Such grammatical evidence does really assist the judgment."

(2) *σκηνὴ* means "stage" ("unless any one will maintain that *σκηνὴ* came to be applied to the orchestra or some part of it"). But this is the whole point at issue, for the real object of our search is the meaning of *σκηνὴ* in *all* Greek literature, and our only present interest in *ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς* consists in its bearing as a possible argument upon the larger question. Consequently, to say (by implication) that at the earliest (extant) appearance of this phrase *σκηνὴ* must mean "stage" because it has that meaning elsewhere is reasoning in a circle.

(3) These meanings obtain at the expression's first appearance in Aristotle ("These passages appear to be decisive"). Though frequently cited, these Aristotelian passages had never (in print) been subjected to a searching analysis from this point of view, and accordingly I undertook to attack this third and crowning feature of Mr. Richards's argument. It is significant that Mr. Richards now feels constrained to give an altered statement of the case. Of course, I am aware that the fact that *ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς* in Aristotle does not mean literally "on the stage" does not *ipso facto* prove that the phrase never had this meaning or that *σκηνὴ* never means "stage" elsewhere (and I have never so claimed, though of course believing in both conclusions on other evidence), but at least it ought to prevent Aristotle's usage from continuing to be cited as an argument without apology and defense. When Mr. Richards abandons fourth-century examples of the phrase and appeals to "the original sense of the expression," I cannot follow him, for no earlier citations are available and we are dependent entirely upon general considerations as to the meaning of *ἐπὶ* and *σκηνὴ* elsewhere — in other words, we are brought back to the main problem at issue.

¹ Cf. the latest writer on the subject, Scherling, 41-45. For Pickard-Cambridge, cf. 114, n. 1, below.

² Cf. "The Meaning of *ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς* in Writers of the Fourth Century," *Decennial Publications of the University of Chicago*, vi, 11-26. The other Aristotelian instances are there discussed and, in my opinion, are alone sufficient to establish the wider significance of the phrase. Professor A. Müller justly criticised me (*BpW.* 1903, 630 and 1909, 202) for the parallels I cited in attempting to prove that the chorus is included among the *ὑποκριτῶν* in *Poet.* 1459 b. But I need not have gone so far afield, since in this same treatise (1456 a) Aristotle explicitly says: *καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἕνα δὲ ὑπολαβεῖν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν καὶ μῦθον εἶναι τοῦ δλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι*. The same citation demolishes the similar objection advanced in *Revue Critique*, 1903, 28. Furthermore, we ought not to forget that the modern playwright, subject to the unity of action but rid of a chorus, feels no restriction to one place and may change scenes half a dozen times in one act, but the composer of a libretto for an opera usually shifts his scene only when the

whole question, to employ one instance from the fourth century as a point of departure for considering the passage in the argument to the *Agamemnon*. And I do this the more gladly for two reasons: (1) whereas the interpretation of the other fourth-century passages must largely depend upon subjective considerations, this one seems capable of a more objective test; and (2) although other portions of my argument have been attacked, this most tangible and conclusive part has been largely ignored. I refer to Aristotle's *Poetics*, 1460 a: *δεῖ μὲν οὖν ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαις ποιεῖν τὸ θαυμαστόν, μᾶλλον δ' ἐνδέχεται ἐν τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ τὸ ἄλογον, δι' ὃ συμβαίνει μάλιστα τὸ θαυμαστόν, διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁρᾶν εἰς τὸν πράττοντα · ἐπεὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν Ἑκτορος δῶξιν ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ὄντα γελοῖα ἂν φανείη, οἱ μὲν ἐστῶτες καὶ οὐ διώκοντες, ὁ δ' ἀνανεύων, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔπαισι λανθάνει*. I have already pointed out that Aristotle was evidently thinking of *Iliad*, xxii, 205 f.:

λαοῖσιν δ' ἀνένευε καρήατι διὸς Ἀχιλλεύς,
οὐδ' ἔα ἰέμεναι ἐπὶ Ἑκτορι πικρὰ βέλεμνα,

and that he was trying to show why a scene that was excellent in an epic could not be dramatized with success. In Homer there are two groups of characters (*a*) Achilles and Hector, and (*b*) the Greek army. In Aristotle's imaginary dramatization of the incident these groups are represented by the actors (*ὁ δέ*) and the chorus (*οἱ μὲν*) respectively. Consequently, if *σκηνή* here means an elevated stage, chorus as well as actors must have stood thereon. Nor did the incongruity consist in the mere position of the chorus inactive in the orchestra and the actors running on the stage, but in the action itself, since the incident is equally irrational in the epic (where orchestra and stage assuredly play no part) but is there more tolerable because the scene is not distinctly visualized. Scherling¹ has succinctly expressed the situation:

chorus is temporarily withdrawn, i.e. between acts. The ancient poet, encumbered with a chorus and unassisted by artificial breaks in the action by reason of the drop curtain, was still further hampered.

¹ Cf. *De vocis σκηνή*, 43. In a note he aptly points out that Megacles had criticised the scene; cf. schol. Ven. A, p. 595 a, 42 (Bekker): *Μεγακλείδης πλάσμα εἶναι φησι τοῦτο τὸ μονομάχιον · πῶς γὰρ τοσαύτας μυριάδας νεύματι Ἀχιλλεὺς ἀπέστρεψεν*;

"At, qui est sententiarum conexus, causa ridiculi non theatri natura, sed ipsa res est: theatrum oculis videt Graecorum exercitum eiusque ducem et Hectorem; iam quod unus Achilles totum exercitum retinet a persequendo, ridiculum est." I do not insist upon *σκηνή* here meaning "play" or "performance," though that is a frequent use and gives the indefinite sense required; but at least until the interpretation just sketched is refuted, or a better one propounded, believers in a stage cannot fairly cite Aristotle's use of *ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς* in support of their opinion.¹

In view of the fourth-century usage it is not surprising that in the later literature this and analogous phrases are unreservedly employed with reference to chorus and actors alike, and this practice in later writers is universally admitted.² It is my present purpose, however, to insist upon still further deviations from traditional usage. Thus, Plutarch, *An Seni*, p. 785 b: *Φιλήμονα δὲ τὸν κωμικὸν καὶ Ἀλεξίῳ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ἀγωνιζομένους καὶ στεφανουμένους ὁ θάνατος κατέλαβε*, as I have previously shown,³ no more means that Philemon and Alexis actually died in the theater (let alone "on the stage") than Cicero's *Platonis, qui uno et octogesimo anno scribens est mortuus (de Sen. 13)* necessarily implies that Plato actually died stylus in hand. In both cases, all that is intended is that they continued active in their profession as writers up to the very last.⁴

¹ Nevertheless, Pickard-Cambridge has brought over this paragraph from the second to the third edition of the *Attic Theatre* (p. 165 f.) absolutely without alteration, except for an additional footnote which refers to the recent discussion, but otherwise begs the question. I cannot but believe that Haigh, had he lived to rewrite this chapter, would have felt the necessity of modifying somewhat the emphasis laid upon this argument.

² Cf. Müller, *Philologus*, Supplbd. vii, 22; Haigh, *Attic Theatre*³, 166, n. 1, etc. Besides the examples cited in *Chicago Decennial Publications*, vi, 22 f., note also that Clemens Alex. (p. 688) called Euripides ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς φιλόσοφος, cf. Vitruv. viii, praef. 1. Of course, Euripides' philosophizing and personal views are found in his *σάσματα*, no less than in his *ἐπεισόδια*.

³ Cf. *Plutarch as a Source of Information on the Greek Theater*, 33.

⁴ Cf. Kaibel in Pauly-Wissowa, I, 1468: "Die Anekdote, Philemon und Alexis habe der Tod überrascht ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ἀγωνιζομένους καὶ στεφανουμένους, verträgt keine scharfe Interpretation." Hermippus ap. Diog. Laert. iii, 2 informs

Thus, it appears that ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς must be interpreted with considerable freedom. We have seen that in the passage under consideration the adverb ἰδίως contrasts Aeschylus' procedure with that of Sophocles and Euripides. Now the general theme of the *Oresteia* was treated or touched upon or presupposed in such plays as the Sophoclean *Erigone*, *Electra*, and *Clytemnestra*, and the Euripidean *Electra*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Orestes*, etc.; but in all these the death of Agamemnon had occurred before the opening scene of the play. It was neither "on the stage" nor "behind the scenes" nor "before the scenes," but ἔξω τῆς τραγῳδίας (*Poet.* 1454 b). In other words, Aeschylus' singularity consisted in bringing this episode within the action of his play. Thus, we may translate freely as follows: "The points in Aeschylus' treatment of the myth which are peculiar and differentiate him from Sophocles and Euripides are: (1) that he brings Agamemnon's death within the course of the dramatic action, (2) that he displays Cassandra's corpse to the spectators (though passing by her death in silence), and (3) that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus employ the same defense for the murder, viz., self-justification, the former because of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia, the latter because of the treatment his father had received at the hands of Atreus."

II. Lucian, *Gallus* 26: ἣν δέ, οἷα πολλὰ γίγνεται, κενεμβατήσας τις αὐτῶν (sc. τῶν τραγικῶν ὑποκριτῶν) ἐν μέσῃ τῇ σκηνῇ καταπέσῃ, γέλωτα δηλαδὴ παρέχει τοῖς θεαταῖς κτλ. Cf. Frazer's *Pausanias*, v, 583: "Lucian tells us (*Gallus* 26) that tragic actors . . . often took a step in empty air (κενεμβατήσας) on the middle of the stage and fell down . . . The expression 'taking a step on emptiness' clearly implies that the players in such cases stepped over the edge of the stage, and the description of the disastrous consequences of their fall proves that they fell from a height. The passage furnishes conclusive evidence that down to Lucian's time the players in Greek theatres regularly acted on a high stage."

us that Plato died at a wedding feast; cf. Huebner's *Commentarii in Diog. Laert.*, I, 457. The statement on the subject in Smith's *Dict. of Greek and Roman Biog.* III, 395, is due to a misunderstanding of Cicero.

Without considering other aspects of the matter,¹ it may be said at once that "on the middle of the stage" and "stepping over the edge of the stage" are inconsistent terms. Nevertheless, Müller (l.c. 18) and Scherling (l.c. 17) interpret *σκηνή* in the same way, and Reisch's² "Spielplatz" is just as objectionable. Of course, Lucian must have been acquainted with theaters of the Roman type, and that may well be what he had in mind in this passage. But in that case *ἐν μέσῃ τῇ σκηνῇ* would better be taken as meaning "in the middle of the performance." It is interesting to note the rendering in Tooke's translation of Lucian (London, 1820) I, 82: "If however, as not seldom happens, one of them inadvertently *in the middle of the scene* makes a false step and tumbles down below the stage, a universal burst of laughter among the spectators ensues." Naturally, Tooke never dreamed of a stageless theater among the Greeks, nor of a controversy on the subject. His version is therefore all the more to the point as coming from a translator absolutely without bias or prejudice.

III. Plutarch, *Vit. Marcell.* 20: *ἦν μὲν ἐκκλησία τῶν πολιτῶν* (of Engyrium in Sicily), *ὁ δὲ Νικίας μεταξὺ τι λέγων καὶ συμβουλευὼν πρὸς τὸν δῆμον ἐξαίφνης ἀφῆκεν εἰς τὴν γῆν τὸ σῶμα . . . ἀναπηδήσας ἔθρε πρὸς τὴν ἔξοδον τοῦ θεάτρου.*

I have previously expressed a doubt as to the precise meaning of the words *ἀφῆκεν εἰς τὴν γῆν τὸ σῶμα*.³ There are three possibilities: (1) that Nicias was standing in the orchestra and sank to the ground, (2) that he was standing on the stage and fell to the orchestra, and (3) that he collapsed upon the floor of the stage. Plutarch's practice of modernizing his sources⁴ renders the third interpretation the most plausible, since he was most familiar with theaters of the Roman type. But the lack of a suitable parallel for *γῆν* in this sense induced me to favor the first explanation and to believe that

¹ At least, the gloss adscript *προσκούσας* shows that Frazer's interpretation of *κενεμβατήσας* has not been the only one; cf. crit. notes in Jacobitz' ed. (Leipzig, 1839) ad loc.

² Cf. Dörpfeld-Reisch, *Das griechische Theater*, 287.

³ Cf. *Plutarch as a Source*, etc., 26, n. 1, and 60.

⁴ Ib. 22 and 60 ff.

Plutarch had taken over these words from his source without noting that they were not strictly appropriate in the new setting. Since then, however, I have noted that in Soph. *Oed. Rex* 1266 γῆ is used of the floor in the royal bed-chamber, which Sophocles would certainly think of as being paved. The third explanation, therefore, is probably the correct one, and this passage falls in line with Plutarch's procedure elsewhere.

IV. Lucian, *Icarom.* 21: οὐ γὰρ ἡγοῦμαι πρέπειν ἀποκαλύψαι καὶ διαφωτίσαι τὰς νυκτερινὰς ἐκείνας διατριβὰς καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ἐκάστου βίον.

The moon is inveighing against the hypocrisy of the philosophers as manifested in the contrast between their pretensions (by day) and their secret practices by night. Perhaps the most idiomatic rendering for τὸν ἐπὶ σκηνῆς βίον is afforded by the French phrase "vie de parade."¹

V. Marcus Aurelius xi, 6:² πρῶτον αἱ τραγωδίαὶ παρήχθησαν ὑπομνηστικαὶ τῶν συμβαινόντων, καὶ ὅτι ταῦτα οὕτω πέφυκε γίνεσθαι, καὶ ὅτι, οἷς ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς ψυχαγωγείσθε, τούτοις μὴ ἄχθεσθε ἐπὶ τῆς μείζονος σκηνῆς. The context shows that the contrast is between real life and that represented on the stage, Cicero's *cum in vita, tum in scaena* (*de Sen.* 65). Reisch (l.c. 287) translates "auf einem Spielplatz höherer Ordnung." This passage is cited by all the scenic authorities, but it is seemingly unknown to them that the same contrast was expressed in the same way several centuries before by the tragic actor Neoptolemus; cf. Stobaeus, *Florilegium* xcviij, 70: Νεοπτόλεμον τὸν τῆς τραγωδίας ὑποκριτὴν ἤρετό τις, τί θανάμᾳζοι τῶν ὑπ' Αἰσχύλου λεχθέντων, ἢ Σοφοκλέους, ἢ Εὐριπίδου. Οὐδὲν μὲν τούτων, εἶπεν. ὁ δ' αὐτὸς ἐθεάσατο ἐπὶ μείζονος σκηνῆς, Φίλιππον ἐν τοῖς τῆς θυγατρὸς Κλεοπάτρας γάμοις πομπεύσαντα, καὶ τρισκαίδέκατον θεὸν ἐπικληθέντα, τῇ ἐξῆς

¹ Cf. schol. ad loc.: τὴν ἐκάστου κατοικίαν λέγει. εἰ μὴ δριμύς καὶ τοῦτο λέγει δραματουργῶν, ὡς ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ἐκάστου τῶν ἀνθρώπων διαβιούντος ἅτε ἄλλου μὲν ὄντος, ἄλλου δὲ ἀξιούντος δοκεῖν. Cf. the similar contrast in Cicero, *de Sen.* 12: nec vero ille (sc. Q. Fabius Maximus) in luce modo atque in oculis civium magnus, sed intus domique praestantior.

Incorrectly cited as xi, 65 by Müller, Reisch, and Scherling.

ἐπισφαγέντα ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ, καὶ ἐρριμμένον (Gaisford's Leipzig ed., III, p. 257). If there were any doubt of the meaning, it would be dissipated by the fact that this portion of the *Florilegium* consists of seventy-five quotations under the caption Περὶ τοῦ βίου, ὅτι βραχὺς καὶ εὐτελής, καὶ φροντίδων ἀνάμεστος.

VI. Lucian, *Nero* 9: ὁ δ' (sc. Νέρων) ἡγρίαινέ τε καὶ μανικῶς εἶχε· καὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ ἡκροᾶτο ὑπὸ τῇ σκηνῇ ἐπ' αὐτῷ δὴ τὰ γῶνι. βοῶντων δὲ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐπὶ τῷ Ἑπειρώτῃ, πέμπει τὸν γραμματέα κελεύων ὑφείναι αὐτῷ τοῦτον. αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑπεραίροντος τὸ φθέγμα καὶ δημοτικῶς ἐρίζοντος, εἰσπέμπει Νέρων ἐπ' ὀκριβάντων τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ ὑποκριτὰς οἷον προσήκοντάς τι τῷ πράγματι· καὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ δέλτους ἐλεφαντίνους καὶ διθύρους προβεβλημένοι αὐτὰς ὥσπερ ἐγχειρίδια καὶ τὸν Ἑπειρώτην ἀναστήσαντες πρὸς τὸν ἀγχοῦ κίονα κατέαξαν αὐτοῦ τὴν φάρυγγα παίοντες ὀρθαῖς ταῖς δέλτοις.

During Nero's visit to Greece in 67 A.D. a tragic contest was improvised at the Isthmus for his benefit. On such occasions it was customary for the other contestants to make no real attempt to win. But here a certain Epirote with a good voice and of some prestige among the Greeks announced his intention of making a real effort for the prize unless the Emperor gave him ten talents. Though the language is somewhat ambiguous, I conceive the course of events to have been somewhat as follows: Upon Nero's indignant refusal to buy off the Epirote, the latter in retaliation practiced so loudly behind the scenes, while the contest was actually in progress, that he could be heard by the audience. Somewhat later, when his turn came, his efforts were punctuated with rounds of applause, and Nero in vexation sent his secretary to urge the Epirote to conclude his rôle and withdraw in Nero's favor. And when the bold fellow persisted in his bid for popular approval by lifting up his voice still higher, Nero sent certain members of his tragic troupe, who backed him against one of the columns in the scenic background and broke his neck. It is also possible to take *βοῶντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐπὶ τῷ Ἑπειρώτῃ* to mean that the Greeks were calling for him while he was still behind the scenes practicing. In that case, *ὑφείναι* would mean that Nero wished

the Epirote to accommodate him by lowering his voice, and *εἰσπέμπει* that the actors were sent into the scene building, where the intrepid performer was slain, and not "upon the stage." To this alternative view, however, there are two objections: (1) the words immediately following the quotation given above (*τραγῳδίαν δὲ ἐνίκα, Μουσώνιε, μιὰρὸν οὕτω πάθος ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐργασάμενος*;) would more naturally mean that the murder was committed "on the stage;" and (2) a convenient column would perhaps be more likely to be found in the scenic background than within the scene building. Of course, if *ὀκριβάντων* here means "stage,"¹ all doubt would be removed.

It is clear that the ancients were as much puzzled by this word as are the moderns. Of the many meanings given it by the ancient lexicographers only two, *λογεῖον* and *ἐμβάται*, are conceivably possible here, and the use of the plural seems to exclude the former of these. It is not my present concern whether it *properly* bears the second meaning. That it *did* bear it is attested by Photius and Suidas, and appears from the following passages: Philost., *Vit. Apoll.* v, 9, p. 89 K: *ὁρῶντες . . . ἐφεστῶτα* (sc. *Νέρωνα*) *ὀκρίβασιν οὕτως ὑψηλοῖς*; ib. vi, 11, p. 113 K: *ὀκρίβαντος δὲ τοὺς ὑποκριτὰς ἀνεβίβασεν* (sc. *Αἰσχύλος*), *ὥς ἴσα ἐκείνοις* (sc. *τοῖς ἡρώσιν*) *βαίνοιεν*; Themistius Or. 26, 316 D: *καὶ οὐ προσέχομεν Ἀριστοτέλει ὅτι . . . Θέσπις πρόλογόν τε καὶ ῥῆσιν ἐξεῦρεν, Αἰσχύλος δὲ τρίτον ὑποκριτὴν καὶ ὀκρίβαντας*; and possibly Philost., *Vit. Sorph.* i, 9, p. 208 K: *εἰ γὰρ τὸν Αἰσχύλον ἐνθυμηθεῖμεν, ὥς πολλὰ τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ ξυμβάλετο, ἐσθῆτί τε αὐτὴν κατασκευάσας καὶ ὀκρίβαντι ὑψηλῶ καὶ ἡρώων εἶδεσιν, κτλ.* (but cf. Horace, *A. P.* 279). It is likely that it was partly in passages such as these that the confusion of meaning arose, but the fact remains that in several writers of the Christian era *ὀκρίβας* means tragic boot.

This meaning affords a satisfactory sense in the passage before us. Nero and his troupe, mounted upon their cothurni,

¹ As dramatic contests were usually not held at the Isthmia, probably temporary arrangements had to be made, and these would naturally conform to the Roman type with which Nero would be most familiar.

were impatiently waiting for the Epirote to conclude, and finally several of the latter were sent on the stage upon their fatal errand. Their tragic profession and tragic costume made them suitable for such a task (οἷον προσήκοντάς τι τῷ πράγματι). This costume, too, would at first deceive the audience into believing them other members of the Epirote's company, and prevent their realizing the import of proceedings until the deed was almost or fully done. The opposite of ἐπ' ὀκριβάντων is found in Lucian's *Necyom.* 16: ἤδη δὲ πέρας ἔχοντος τοῦ δράματος ἀποδυσάμενος ἕκαστος αὐτῶν (sc. τῶν τραγικῶν ὑποκριτῶν) τὴν χρυσόπαστον ἐκείνην ἐσθῆτα καὶ τὸ προσωπεῖον ἀποθέμενος καὶ καταβὰς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐμβατῶν πένης καὶ ταπεινὸς περίεισιν οὐκέτ' Ἀγαμέμνων . . . οὐδὲ Κρέων . . . ἀλλὰ Πῶλος . . . ἢ Σάτυρος.

Although my interpretation of ὀκριβάντων is not a new one,¹ it has seemed to me that the passage deserved a discussion of some length and none is known to me. Incidentally, the above discussion has a bearing upon the authorship of the *Nero*, for, though found among Lucian's works in the Mss, the correctness of the attribution has been suspected since Kayser pointed out that Suidas mentions a *Nero* among the titles of the oldest Philostratus (a contemporary of Nero). The disentanglement of the different men of this name is a difficult problem, and there is a tendency to reject altogether the oldest Philostratus mentioned by Suidas and to distribute his titles to the others, mostly (including the *Nero*) to Philostratus III.² Accordingly, the fact that ὀκρίβας = ἐμβάτης does not occur elsewhere in Lucian, together with the parallels above cited from the *Vit. Soph.* and *Vit. Apoll.*, can reasonably be cited as an additional argument for attributing the *Nero* either to the author of these works (Philostratus II) or to some one reared in the same environment and under his influence (viz. his son-in-law and pupil, Philostratus III).

¹ Cf. Wieseler, in Ersch-Gruber, *Encyclopädie*, IV, 206, n. 20.

² Cf. Christ, *Gesch. d. gr. Lit.*⁴ 776 and 752 f. and n. 8.